COLLABORATION:
MANAGING YOUR ROLE

4–C

Job Performance
Situation 4:
Building Collaboration in
Head Start

HEAD START
MOVING AHEAD
COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

Developed under delivery order number 105-99-2091, the Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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REFERENCE

This activity develops skill competencies in demonstrating leadership in the 4 stages of collaboration; articulating the organization's mission, goals, and resources; strengthening the organization's position by building a community network; recognizing and reaching out to potential partners; determining your authority to collaborate; representing the organization in a collaboration; and keeping a collaboration healthy.

Related skill activities include 3-C, Facilitation: Fundamentals of Leading Meetings; 3-E, Communication: Effective Spoken Communication; 3-F, Communication: Active Listening Skills; 4-D, Collaboration: Negotiating and Formalizing Agreements; 4-E, Influencing Others: Applying Basic Skills; and 5-D, Presentations: Developing Effective Presentations.

Sources:

Head Start Performance Standards.

R. McCambridge and M.F. Weis. *Rush to Merge*. 1997. Management Consulting Services, Boston, MA.

M. Winer and K. Ray. *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey.* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Interview with Leslie Jenkins, Region X ACF Program Specialist, June 1999.

Melaville and M.J. Blank. *Together We Can.* 1993. U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, *Community Partnerships: Working Together.* 1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

C. Bruner Address to the Annie E. Casey Foundation New Futures Retreat, July 10, 1991.

Remarks at Head Start Focus Group on Collaboration, July 1999.

P. Block. *Stewardship: A Governance Strategy for the Learning Organization.* A keynote presentation at the *Systems Thinking in Action Conference,* Boston, MA, September 18–20, 1995.

C. Bruner, Remarks at Head Start Focus Group on Collaboration, July 1999.

OVERVIEW

COLLABORATION: MANAGING YOUR ROLE

Outcomes. Participants who complete this activity will be able to:

- define and prepare for the role of the convener, leader, or broker in a collaboration
- assess the developmental stage of an existing collaboration and devise strategies for moving the collaboration forward
- identify potential community partners and strategies for beginning a dialogue with them
- clarify the limits of authority as the organization's representative
- articulate the organization's expectations to partnering organizations
- communicate the benefits and costs of being involved in a partnership

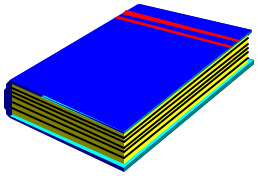
Materials. Newsprint and markers.

Components. This activity can be completed by one person, an informal group, or as part of a formal workshop. Suggested time limits are provided below, but participants and facilitators may wish to adjust these to their own timetables.

Step 1. Background Reading: Moving Your Organization Through Collaboration	15 min.
Step 2. Worksheet: Understanding the Collaboration Process	35 min.
Handout: New Beginnings: One Community's Story	10 min.
Step 3. Background Reading: Building a Community Network	10 min.
Step 4. Worksheet: Applying Networking Skills	45 min.
Step 5. Background Reading: Representing Your Organization	10 min.
Step 6. Worksheet: Meeting the Challenge	30 min.
Step 7. Summary	10 min.
Suggested total time	2 hrs. 45 min.

This activity contains 30 pages.

STEP 1. BACKGROUND READING: MOVING YOUR ORGANIZATION THROUGH COLLABORATION



Suggested time: 15 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margin throughout these activities.

Grantee and delegate agencies must take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs, and to ensure that Early Head Start and Head Start programs respond to community needs…[1]

Since its inception, Head Start has had a proud history of partnering with other community-based programs. Head Start's commitment to community-based services and its requirement that local programs secure at least 20 percent of their funding through local sources has generated relationships with local governments, school districts, social service agencies, libraries, faith-based organizations, and other local organizations that support children and families. The 1998 Revised Head Start Performance Standards renewed and expanded this expectation. These standards clearly articulate that local programs must engage in collaborative relationships within their communities to promote responsive services for children and families. In addition, 1998 Amendments to the Head Start Act provide clear mandates that directors of Head Start-funded State Collaboration Projects play a central role in promoting and supporting unified planning and coordination of services for the children served by Head Start.

Head Start is not the only organization to increase its involvement in community partnerships. Since the early 1990s, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of nonprofit organizations throughout the country that have begun to explore collaboration as a means to expand their capacity to deliver services. In the publication *Rush to Merge,* authors Ruth McCambridge and Mary Frances Weis suggest some reasons that organizations are engaging in an increasing number of collaborative activities:

[1] Head Start Performance Standards 1304.41 (a) (2).

- "the reorganization of public funding and trends in public/political thought demanding greater accountability for outcomes in social programs
- infusion of the managed care ideology and structures into human services as well as health care
- competition both from non-profit and for-profit organizations
- changing demographics in our communities"[2]

In collaboration activities, leaders throughout Head Start play important roles that differ depending on their position in the organization. Leaders at the local level are engaged as initiators or members of local relationships; while Federal staff play the role of convener, facilitator, and/or supporter of local joint efforts. Federal staff also engage in partnerships of their own with other State and national agencies and departments. In any of these roles it is important that the Head Start leader understand the following:

- why organizations partner
- how collaborative relationships are initiated
- stages in the development and maintenance of collaborations
- skills and expectations that collaboration leaders must employ.

I. Why Partner?

Head Start programs touch the lives of children and their families in many ways, but there is a limit to Head Start's capacity to serve this population. Successful Federal and local leaders recognize these limits and expand their own organization's capacity to serve children and their families by creating partnerships with other organizations. By tapping into the strengths and resources of others, Head Start leaders can create new or expanded services, eliminate unnecessary duplication of services in the community, provide increased access to data and information, and build the skills of all partners. These partnerships can also provide a strong community voice on issues that are critical to children and families.

Partnerships are a means to an end, not the end itself. Because of the time, energy, and resources required to form successful partnerships, they may not be the best means to address every community issue or problem. In many cases, a solitary organization working with the support of others can address an issue more quickly and effectively than a partnership. The wise Head Start leader understands the capacity of her own organization and carefully assesses when a partnership can help her organization reach a goal or respond to a need.

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[2] From R. McCambridge and M.F. Weis. *Rush to Merge*. 1997. Management Consulting Services, Boston, MA,
p. 5.

Partnerships can take a number of forms. Imagine the range of partnerships as a continuum that ranges from cooperation to collaboration.

- Organizations can expand their capacity through informal cooperative arrangements in which they share information with other organizations without any clearly defined mission, structure, or planning.[3] For example, local Head Start programs cooperate with other family service organizations in the community by regularly sharing information about each other's services.

- Organizations can expand their capacity through coordination—a more formal relationship in which organizations focus their interactions on specific efforts or programs. "Coordination requires some planning and division of roles and opens channels of communication between organizations."[4] In coordination, authority still rests with the individual organizations. For example, a Head Start program in Connecticut coordinates an annual recruitment fair with other child-care providers in its community. Parents who attend the fair learn about the availability of, and their eligibility for, a wide range of child-care services. Similarly, Federal Head Start staff frequently work with State Head Start associations to coordinate joint training conferences. Although the participating agencies contribute time, staff, and funding to ensure the events' success, the coordination does not require changes to the systems of the individual organizations.

- Organizations can expand their capacity through collaboration. "Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone."[5] Sometimes partners in a collaboration have equal status and power, as when the Region X ACF office joined with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to fund 210 additional Head Start children from Idaho's TANF savings.[6] In other collaboratives, as when Head Start programs contract with other child-care organizations to provide services to children, power can be unequal.

Federal and local Head Start organizations routinely participate in all types of relationships along the cooperation/coordination/collaboration continuum. Although in this activity we will focus primarily on the formation of collaborations, much of the information we discuss can be applied to the less formal cooperation and coordination activities as well.

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[3] M. Winer and K. Ray. *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining, and Enjoying the Journey*. St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, p. 22.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 24.
[6] Interview with Leslie Jenkins, Region X ACF Program Specialist, June 1999.

II. How Do Collaborations Come About?

In some cases, collaborations begin with an organization extending to one or more potential partners an invitation to work on a specific project. Sometimes the invitation goes out in response to a request for proposal (RFP) to collaboratives from a government agency or foundation. For example, the State of Massachusetts provides community partnership grants to more than 50 community collaboration councils that consist of public schools, Head Start programs, and child-care programs. In other cases, a community leader who recognizes the potential benefit of a successful joint effort invites representatives of a broad array of community groups to explore ways that joint initiatives can help them better serve their customers. Sometimes a community issue or problem, such as a need for affordable housing or an increase in community violence, prompts this "sweep" approach.

As a central institution in the community, Head Start can often play an important leadership role.

III. Stages In Collaboration Development

There is no formula for developing a successful collaborative relationship. The developmental path of each joint effort is shaped by the circumstances of its inception and the players involved in it. For instance, collaborations formed as part of a funding request will differ significantly from those that are the vision of community leaders brought together through a sweep approach. Collaborations formed in response to a request for proposal follow a different timeline than those in which partners have the luxury of progressing in a more deliberate way.

Collaboration researchers use several different models to chronicle the development of interagency partnerships. One writer depicts the process as a spiral of stages and milestones through which the partnership must progress;[7] another sees collaboration as progressing around a cloverleaf-shaped road.[8] Others liken the process to a courtship. Whatever metaphor is used to explain the process, most observers report that collaborations proceed through a number of overlapping stages.[9]

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[7] A. Melaville and M.J. Blank. *Together We Can.* 1993. U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC, p. 21.
[8] M.Winer and K. Ray, p. 38.
[9] Adapted from Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, *Community Partnerships: Working Together*. 1998. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, pp. 11–12.

Stage 1: Getting Together

In Stage 1, a small group comes together to explore how to address an issue or need of concern to all participants. Recognizing that collaboration is not the appropriate response to every community issue or need, group members explore whether they can better address the issue as a group or by several partners acting independently. If partnership appears to be the better course, initial members identify and invite others who may have a stake in the same issue to participate. The group then explores initial ground rules for working together.

Stage 2: Building Trust and Ownership

In Stage 2, group members make a joint commitment to become partners and collaborate, and may even commit startup resources. Partners will also exchange information and views on the issue that brought them together; they will create a shared vision of what they hope to accomplish and revisit their initial ground rules for working together.

Stage 3: Developing a Strategic Plan

In Stage 3, partners develop a mission statement and a set of goals. Partners also identify the strengths and needs of the collaboration itself, as well as opportunities and threats in the community that will affect the outcome. Using the results of this analysis, partners develop multiple strategies and select those that are most likely to work. They will also develop the interagency agreements necessary to put the partnership plans in place.

Stage 4: Taking Action

In Stage 4, partners begin to implement the strategies that define their plan. If they are not already involved, partners must bring program administrators and members of governing bodies and policy groups to the table to approve the plan's interagency agreements. Sometimes this support requires that the partnering organizations commit resources beyond those already provided. Often, the partnering organizations need to revise or modify their existing policies and procedures to support the plan.

Keeping the Collaboration Healthy

Truly successful collaborations are those that continue to achieve their mission long after the thrill of the creative process has been forgotten. In many cases the pioneers who originally came together, built trust, and developed a plan among their organizations now hand off the work of the collaboration to others in their organizations who will carry out the strategic plan. To ensure that the creation will continue to thrive,

collaboration architects need to put mechanisms in place for ongoing communication and problem solving among the organizations involved, as well as for development of supportive cultures among the partners and regularly scheduled evaluation of the collaboration's progress.

IV. What Skills Do Collaborators Need?

Collaboration experts agree that collaboration:

- takes time—getting to know and respond to one another's philosophies, priorities, and services does not happen overnight
- requires trust—understanding organizational cultures and values is a prerequisite for working together
- requires that partners share a philosophy and mission and operate from principles instead of on funding mandates
- frequently requires participants to change the way they do things in their own organization as well as in the outside community
- is challenging and often requires us to exercise skills and behaviors that we might not ordinarily use within our organizations.

According to collaboration expert Charles Bruner, "…collaboration ultimately occurs among people and not among institutions. While participants can and should bring with them the power to influence activities within their institutions, collaboration itself occurs as a social process among people."[10] As a rule, successful collaborators are visionaries who are willing to take risks and are driven by principles rather than regulations. Because they view the world through a "systems" perspective, they are acutely aware of how their own services interconnect with those of others in the community.

Bruner also argues that the skills needed to make collaboration work differ from the competitive skills required for success within an organization. He stresses that organizational leaders have risen to the top of their organization because of their ability and willingness to make unilateral decisions and carry them through. These leaders often have a specialized knowledge in a particular field, and are skilled in marketing themselves and their organization.

Successful collaborators, on the other hand, require a set of interpersonal skills that allow them to share decision-making responsibility and practice the patience they need to build consensus among parties with different orientations. Rather than coming from the perspective of a specialist, the collaborator needs to understand the big picture and appreciate the perspectives, needs, and resources of others in the collaborative. Rather

[10] C. Bruner Address to the Annie E. Casey Foundation New Futures Retreat, July 10, 1991, p. 4.

than seeking to advance themselves or their own organizations, skilled collaborators look for ways to advance the agenda of the collaborative.

Listed below are skills needed in the different stages of collaboration. Some skills are always essential (e.g., spoken communication) and appear in every stage. Others, like planning, are more specialized and are listed only once. Many of these skills are addressed in other *Moving Ahead* performance situations; we have indicated the activity number after each skill. Participants can learn more about negotiating and formalizing agreements by completing Activity 4-D, and influencing others in Activity 4-E.

STAGES OF COLLABORATION	**SKILLS NEEDED**
Getting Together	Spoken Communication (3-E) Written Communication (3-G) Making Presentations (5-D) Influencing Others (4-E) Facilitation (3-C)
Building Trust and Ownership	Spoken Communication (3-E) Facilitation (3-C) Active Listening (3-F) Conflict Resolution (5-C) Negotiating and Formalizing Agreements (4-D)
Developing a Strategic Plan	Spoken Communication (3-E) Planning (7-E) Conflict Resolution (5-C) Negotiating and Formalizing Agreements (4-D)
Taking Action	Spoken Communication (3-E) Making Presentations (5-D) Influencing Others (4-E)

The background readings included in steps 3 and 5 will explore ways in which Federal and local staff can use these skills as they engage in partnering.

STEP 2. WORKSHEET: UNDERSTANDING THE COLLABORATION PROCESS

Suggested time: 35 min.

Purpose: To give participants a chance to apply what they have learned about the stages of collaboration.

Part I (15 min.) Read the handout "New Beginnings: One Community's Story" following this worksheet. This handout chronicles the development of an actual collaboration in San Diego, CA. Answer the following questions as they relate to the case:

Stage 1: Getting Together

1. What was the motivation for the collaboration?
2. What strategies were used to pull the group together?

Stage 2: Building Trust and Ownership

3. What were the key activities/strategies used to build trust in the collaboration?
4. What were the key activities/strategies used to build ownership in the collaboration?

Stage 3: Developing a Strategic Plan

5. What steps did the group take to develop a strategic plan?
6. How did the vision and mission of the collaboration translate into actual practice?

Stage 4: Taking Action

7. What were the benefits of the collaborative's action plan?
8. What were the challenges?
9. How did they address these challenges?

Part II (10 min.) Think of a proposed or current collaboration in which your organization is involved. Answer as many questions as you can, considering the stage of your collaboration's development. How is your collaboration similar to New Beginnings? How is it different? What did

you learn from analyzing the case that may help to further your own collaboration?

Part III (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or a group, discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.

HANDOUT: NEW BEGINNINGS: ONE COMMUNITY'S STORY[11]

Suggested time: 10 min.

Getting Together

The collaboration began with a telephone call: Richard Jacobsen, then-director of the Department of Social Services, called Tom Payzant, superintendent of the San Diego City Schools. Jacobsen explained that the Department of Social Services and a few County colleagues had been talking about the need to collaborate and address the range of family problems.

That conversation led to the initial 1988 meeting of 26 high-ranking public officials of four County offices, representing San Diego City and County, the San Diego City Schools, and the San Diego Community College District. All the agencies involved faced shrinking budgets and growing demand and were responsible for providing part of each family's services. The agencies agreed that the fragmented approach was not working; something entirely different was needed.

Building Trust and Ownership

At the initial meeting, Jacobsen dealt with seemingly minor details such as providing lunch and time for attendees to get to know one another. Before the meeting ended, the group lined up for a photograph, which Jacobsen later sent to all the participants. These small gestures set the tone for a possible partnership.

Shortly thereafter, the agencies agreed to collaborate in order to develop a system to put family needs ahead of paperwork; the result was "New Beginnings." No minimum financial contribution was required of the agencies, but partners pledged through a governance agreement to contribute whatever staff time, supplies, and services they could afford. New Beginnings relied on grants from various foundations for startup costs.

[11] Adapted from *Community Partnerships: Working Together*, pp. 23–24.

Each agency's top executive made the commitment to stay personally involved in New Beginnings. Though top-level involvement was key, the group agreed that staff at all levels had to be involved. The conveners decided to invite the San Diego Housing Commission, San Diego School of Medicine at the University of California, San Diego Children's Hospital and Health Center, and the IBM Corporation to join the effort.

The New Beginnings Council, a group of mid- and high-level staff from each agency, drove the nuts-and-bolts work of the new collaborative. Decisions were made through consensus rather than through majority rule. Elected officials were not forgotten; though the partners agreed to buffer the new collaborative from the political fray, they were careful to keep their elected officials aware of their work.

Developing a Strategic Plan

After 2 years of talking, the collaborative began to put in place the foundation for action. Working from the shared vision, the collaborative created the following mission statement: "A tearing down of barriers, a giving up of turf, and a new way of doing business in order to help families." The collaborative discussed goals: it aimed to improve children's health, social and emotional well being, and school achievement; self-sufficiency and parental involvement in families; and unity among institutions.

When it came to actually instituting such change, however, the collaborative needed help. The Stuart Foundation offered the consulting skills of Sidney Gardner, an expert in collaboration. Gardner asked the hard questions on issues such as target group selection, confidentiality, common eligibility, and funding that helped push the collaborative ahead. Eventually, the collaborative decided to develop a preventive program targeted at elementary school children and their families; they went on to study the feasibility of providing the services of many agencies at or near a school site. All the partners agreed to make in-kind contributions to offset the cost of the $217,000 study.

The study documented a key assumption held by the partners: by sharing their databases—with information coded to protect families' privacy—the partners discovered just how many clients they had in common. Most importantly, the study provided a basis for reallocating existing dollars.

The partners agreed that to make the service system family-centered, smaller units of workers needed to be assigned to specific neighborhoods. These workers would remain in their home agencies but would be a part of an extended team that collaborated with agency workers and others in the field.

Taking Action

In September 1991, after 3 years of planning, the partners opened New Beginnings Center for Children and Families. Here, representatives from a score of agencies act as family service advocates; broker public services; and provide some direct services such as immunizations, school registration, and counseling. Instead of working side by side, these agencies now work together.

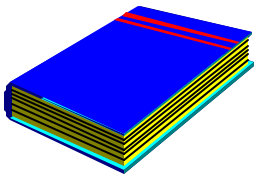
Perhaps the greatest challenge was building the team. After months of working together, the potential of the partnership began to become apparent. Resource teacher Sally Skartvedt says, "As we get to know each other, we feel more confidence and trust in each other and respect for each other." Full-scale implementation of the mission required detailed interagency agreements spelling out workers' roles and the information they can share with other agencies.

New Beginnings also took on the issue of confidentiality. The group discovered that procedures, not law, are the major barriers to information sharing. To overcome these obstacles, the collaborative planned to provide additional training to staff. The collaborative also developed a release form that allows families to permit the sharing of confidential information among the partner agencies.

The Result: One Example

The experience of Silvia Gonzalez illustrates the influence of the New Beginnings program on the existing system and the individuals it serves. Silvia's daughter, Liliana, was getting ready to leave Head Start and begin kindergarten at Hamilton Elementary in inner-city San Diego. Silvia wanted to sign Liliana up for the free lunch program; however, she was not looking forward to filling out another application. Then one day, a letter came in the mail. Because Silvia was already in the food stamp program, the letter read, her children were automatically eligible for free school lunches. The letter was one tangible sign of New Beginnings' effort to remake San Diego's education and human services bureaucracies.

STEP 3. BACKGROUND READING: BUILDING A COMMUNITY NETWORK



Suggested time: 10 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margin throughout these activities.

Leaders become involved in partnerships in a number of ways: through their own initiative, through the invitation of other community leaders, or at the prompting of a funder. Observers of community collaborations tell us that Head Start leaders with the best record of partnerships across the cooperation-to-collaboration continuum are those who:

- have a clear understanding of their own organization's mission, goals, and culture
- have well-developed networks in the community.

In the following sections, we will discuss ways in which Head Start leaders can develop these closely related and often overlapping competencies.

I. LOOKING INWARD—CLARIFYING AND ARTICULATING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MISSION, GOALS, AND CULTURE

Effective leaders—at all levels in any organization—continually challenge themselves and their organization to find better ways to meet the needs of their customers. Sometimes they do this by improving their internal services. In other cases, they recognize the need for outside resources and tap into them. Leaders who are expert in making these determinations are those who understand and can clearly describe their organization.

Understand Your Program's Mission

The mission is the guiding light of the organization: it tells leaders, staff, and customers what the organization hopes to accomplish; who it will serve; and the values that will guide its work. Wise leaders, especially in times of rapid change, review and periodically update their organizational mission statements to make sure that they reflect the organization's business reality. They use these touchstones to make decisions about service delivery by asking questions such as:

- Will this new activity help to advance our mission? If it is a new type of service, is it consistent with the mandate of our mission?

- Will the activity serve our target population? If not, is our target population too narrowly defined? Are we prepared to expand our existing mission to include new constituents (e.g., families that do not meet the Head Start income guidelines)?
- If we engage in this new activity, can we do so in a way that reflects our organizational values and philosophy?

Recognize and Respond to Gaps in Service

Head Start leaders—at both the local and Federal levels—have the advantage of many sources of information. Wise leaders regularly synthesize and review the information they collect and ask themselves questions such as the following:

At the grantee level:

- What do our community assessments; family partnership agreements; the Program Information Report; and conversations with parents, staff, and the governing board tell us about our families' needs and the trends in our community?
- What do our annual self-assessment; employee performance reviews; and feedback from our Federal, State, and local partners tell us about what we do well and our niche in the community?
- What are our goals?
- What internal and external resources can we mobilize to meet our goals?
- How can we engage others in addressing the needs of our constituents that fall beyond our mission?

At the Federal level:

- What do the results of our onsite monitoring reviews, the PIR, and data on national and community trends tell us about the needs of the grantees we fund?
- What do our employee performance reviews; conversations with our Federal, State, and local colleagues; and feedback from the Quality Improvement Centers, consultants, and grantees tell us about what we do well and how well we enable grantees to serve the needs of children and families?
- What are our goals?
- What internal and external resources can we mobilize to meet our goals?
- How can we engage others in addressing the needs of our constituents that fall beyond our mission?

Build Capacity for External Partnerships within Your Organization

Collaboration experts report that organizations that are most successful in external partnerships support a culture of internal collaboration. Leaders should work within their own organizations to build a culture of collaboration by:

- involving staff, the governing bodies, and constituents in defining an evolving vision of the organization
- developing a culture of shared decision-making among staff, the governing bodies, and constituents
- enhancing staff capacity by regularly sharing information about organizational priorities and policies
- helping staff act by viewing regulations as the scaffolding on which the program is built, not roadblocks to service delivery.

II. LOOKING OUTWARD—BUILDING A COMMUNITY NETWORK

Trust is an essential ingredient in any successful partnership. Community members who explore the possibility of a partnership are more likely to approach those with whom they already have a relationship. Veterans of successful collaborations report that once a collaboration is initiated, this trust-building process flows more smoothly among partners who already know and respect one another.

Head Start leaders can take a number of steps to build trusting relationships with those in their community:

Define Your Community

Each Head Start leader will belong to a different community (or group of communities) based on her location in the Head Start constellation. Although local program leaders can simply define their community by the town, city, tribe, or other geopolitical area that the program serves, Federal staff may need to give more careful thought to defining the community in which they need to build a network. Federal staff in regional offices may choose to view the region's Head Start organizations and departments of State and Federal government that serve their region as part of their community. Program specialists who have State assignments might choose to include the State Head Start Association and different State departments. Bureau staff, particularly those who represent a particular Head Start focus area like education or health, may choose to include national organizations with similar missions, interests, and constituents in their defined community.

Identify Potential Partners

Skilled collaborators understand the value of a strong network and recognize that every member of their network is a possible future partner. With this is mind, collaborators should build relationships with those who have:

- Power and influence—In a local community, mayors, superintendents, tribal chiefs, and leaders of business and service organizations have access to resources and have power over how those resources are spent. Ensuring that community power brokers hold a local Head Start program in high regard will increase the likelihood of their support or participation in a collaborative relationship that will benefit Head Start children and families.

- Shared stakes—Because of the fragmented nature of human services delivery, many different organizations provide services to the same population. Building a relationship with those concerned with the housing, health, or family-preservation needs of the community may lead to partnerships that allow organizations to serve their constituents better. Similarly, Head Start leaders often find that business leaders who employ Head Start parents are open to joint ventures.

- Similar values—At first glance, agencies sometimes appear to share the same values, but a closer look reveals that these agencies operate with different motives and rewards. Although partnerships with dissimilar groups are necessary, the difficult tasks of building trust and developing a shared vision can be easier with partners who share similar philosophies.

Find Ways to Share Your Message

Skillful collaborators are "always in dialogue," according to one expert.[12] By openly comparing their own needs and interests with those in their networks, these collaborators seek opportunities to meet needs that cannot be met with their agency's resources alone. Through this ongoing dialogue, partners share information about:

- their organization's mission
- the needs of their constituents and the interests of their organizations
- their niche in the community
- their openness to partnering arrangements
- what each group brings to the table as well as what they are prepared to give up.

[12] Remarks at Head Start Focus Group on Collaboration, Washington, DC, July 8 and 9, 1999.

There are countless ways for Head Start leaders to share these messages. One of the most common is for leaders to serve together on committees or swap membership on agency boards. Local programs often invite community members to serve on the Health Services Advisory Committee (or other committees) or to participate in the program's annual self-assessment. If a network member has limited time, leaders invite her to an open house or an informal lunch with children or parents to get a flavor for the program. If a more informational session is in order, leaders schedule an annual courtesy call in which they briefly update the network member on recent accomplishments and goals for the coming year.

STEP 4. WORKSHEET: APPLYING NETWORKING SKILLS

Suggested time: 45 min.

Purpose: To enable participants to apply what they have learned about building a community network for themselves.

Part I (25 min.) Answer the following questions on your own or with a partner from your organization.

1. Review the "Looking Inward" section in the previous background reading to help you think about what you want potential partners to know about your organization. Use the spaces below to record your message.

   - My organization's mission (what it hopes to accomplish, those it serves, and the values that guide its work) is:

   - The current three most critical needs of our direct constituents are: (For Federal staff, consider the needs of your grantees—e.g., new facilities or training for education staff—not the needs of the families they serve.)

   a.

   b.

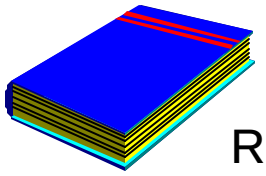
   c.

   - We are most proud of our ability to:

2. Review the "Looking Outward" section of the previous background reading. Think about your community. Identify by name and/or title those who should be part of your community network because of their positions of power and influence, shared constituents, or similar values:

3. For those individuals with whom you do not currently have a relationship, identify a strategy for beginning a dialogue.

Part II (20 min.) If you are working in pairs or a group, discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.



STEP 5. BACKGROUND READING: REPRESENTING YOUR ORGANIZATION

Suggested time: 10 min.

Study the following reading. Feel free to highlight sections or write comments in the margin throughout these activities.

Accountability means holding the well-being of the organization in your hands.

-Peter Block[13]

Head Start leaders at both the grantee and Federal levels play active roles in the formation and development of partnerships. As their agency's representative, these leaders play a unique dual role. They not only represent their own organization to the collaborative, they also represent the collaborative to their own organization. They must delicately balance the needs of the home organization and clients while working for and promoting the success of the collaborative. In essence, they hold the well-being of both organizations in their hands.

To be successful in this complex dance, as a collaborative leader you will need to:

- Understand and clarify the limits of your authority.
- Know and articulate what your organization expects from the collaboration—including its underlying interests and what it is prepared to give up.
- Communicate to your organization the benefits and costs of being involved as well as the power, commitment, and capabilities of the partners.
- Assist your organization in modifying its operation.

I. UNDERSTAND AND CLARIFY THE LIMITS OF YOUR AUTHORITY

As your organization's representative to the collaborative, you *are* the organization. The other partners in the collaborative will form thoughts and impressions of your organization on the basis of what you say or don't say, and how you act or don't act. Although this is particularly true during the getting-together and trust-building stages, other collaboration partners

[13] P. Block. *Stewardship: A Governance Strategy for the Learning Organization.* A keynote presentation at the *Systems Thinking in Action Conference,* Boston, MA, September 18–20, 1995.

will carefully observe your words and actions at all stages for clues about your organization and its commitment to the endeavor. Representatives who come to the table with little to say or in confusion about their role can leave other partners with the impression that the collaboration is not high on the agency's agenda. At the other extreme, representatives who join preliminary discussions with clearly thought-out action plans can signal that their organization is planning to play an overly dominant role in any venture that may result.

You can minimize the possibility of conveying an incorrect impression to potential partners (particularly if you are not the nominal head of your organization) by being clear about your role as representative of your organization. Consider the following questions:

- What is my role? Am I here only to gather information, or do I have the authority to make commitments for my organization?
- What types of commitments can I make for my organization?
- At what point must I check in with my supervisor, the Policy Council, or the governing board before proceeding?

Federal representatives who attend as conveners, facilitators, or supporters of the partnership might ask these additional questions:

- What Federal priorities do I need to articulate?
- Which regulations or agency goals may have implications for this partnership?
- What information about partnership experiences in other communities could inform the discussion?
- What kinds of understandings or agreements need to be in place?

II. KNOW AND ARTICULATE WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION EXPECTS FROM THE COLLABORATION

As your organization's representative to the collaborative, you are responsible for articulating your organization's expectations and negotiating to ensure that its interests are met. You can be more effective in these capacities by clarifying a number of issues at each stage of the collaboration.

Getting Together

If your organization is extending an invitation to other organizations:

- What do we hope to gain by the collaboration? Do we have a targeted agenda, or are our hopes for the group more flexible?
- What is our history of cooperation and collaboration in our community? What lessons can we learn from past experiences?

If your organization is the recipient of the invitation:

- What is our initial response to the invitation? For example, how would the idea(s) raised in the invitation fit with our mission statement, our strategic direction, and the goals in our 3-year plan?
- Do we see any potential conflicts of interest?
- What history do we have with others who will be at the table? Have our previous encounters been positive?
- Who else do we think should be invited?
- What ground rules would we suggest for the meeting?
- How can we ensure that our important organizational values (e.g., involvement of parents in the decision-making process) will be honored in the process?

Building Trust and Ownership

- Is my organization willing to make an initial commitment to collaborate?
- What startup resources in the form of money, resources, time, and energy are we willing to commit?
- Does the collaborative's initial shared vision sufficiently match my own organization's mission and values?

Developing a Strategic Plan

- How will the proposed mission and goals fit with those of my home organization?
- What do we hope to gain by participating in the collaboration?
- Which Federal, State, or local regulations does the collaboration need to take into consideration?
- Which of the collaborative strategies would my home organization support?
- What resources are my home organization willing to contribute to carry out the strategic plan?
- How much control and oversight do we hope to maintain?

Taking Action

- Who needs to sign off on interagency agreements that put the plan into action?
- What role will we have in the ongoing monitoring of the agreement?

III. COMMUNICATE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF BEING INVOLVED AS WELL AS THE POWER, COMMITMENT, AND CAPABILITIES OF THE PARTNERS

According to Charles Bruner, "people collaborate when they see there's a win-win opportunity."[14] As the collaborative's representative to your home organization, one of your main tasks is to provide the information needed to help your organization make an informed decision about participation. To do so, you must communicate a clear picture of the benefits of participation as well as the costs in terms of time, energy, resources, and lost opportunities.

As part of this process, decision-makers need to carefully weigh the risk of entering into a relationship with other organizations. Because of your role as representative and negotiator, decision-makers will rely on your opinion of the partner agency's commitment and capability to carry through on its end of the deal. To prepare yourself to provide the best information available, consider:

- What have our past experiences with the partners been like? Did they follow through on commitments? If not, why are they more likely to do so now?
- What are our partners' reputations and positions in the community? How would our reputation (and desirability as a future partner) be affected if we decided not to partner now?
- Have our partners received preliminary endorsements from their funders for the project?
- What do I know about the other organizations' philosophy and operating practices? If they are significantly different from our own, what steps will we need to take to bring us better into alignment?

[14] C. Bruner. Remarks at Head Start Focus Group on Collaboration, Washington DC, July 8 and 9, 1999.

Federal representatives should also consider:

- What resources might they need to commit to make the collaboration viable?
- What special grant conditions might they institute to ensure grantee follow-through on the agreements?

IV. ASSIST YOUR ORGANIZATION IN MODIFYING ITS OPERATION

Most partnering organizations will need to make changes in their home operations as collaborations move into the Taking Action stage. As one of the leaders who brought the collaboration into being, you are in a unique position to help guide your organization through these changes. Under the best of circumstances, you have kept staff and policy-makers informed of the reasons for and benefits of the collaboration throughout its formation. (See Activity 4-E, Influencing Others for ways to keep staff and colleagues informed.) But when the collaboration becomes reality, it is helpful to update staff and celebrate the event both internally and externally.

Because of your role in negotiating the interagency agreements, you are in an ideal position for making the agreements come to life by helping redesign your organization's operating procedures and policies. If you are a Federal representative, you may have the responsibility of ensuring that the grant awards committed in the negotiations are funded and that special funding conditions are put in place.

STEP 6. WORKSHEET: MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Suggested time: 30 min.

Purpose: To provide participants a chance to prepare for their role as a representative to a partnership.

Part I (15 min.) Select one of the following scenarios. If you are Federal staff, you may wish to select Scenario 1; if you represent a grantee, you may wish to select Scenario 2. Read the scenario on your own and answer the questions that follow.

Scenario 1. You are a Federal program specialist with lead responsibilities for a State in your region. Ben, your State's Collaboration Project director, invites you to join a group that will help him develop a plan to allocate State dollars for "Head Start-like" services in his State. Existing Head Start programs and child-care programs will be eligible to apply for the funds. When the State made similar funds available to Head Start programs several years ago, programs were able to count children served through these funds as State-funded Head Start children; Ben hopes this can happen again. Juanita, the State's Child-Care Administrator; Marjorie, the president of the State Head Start Association; representatives from two day-care programs; and the Collaboration Project Director will attend. You know Marjorie and Ben. You've met Juanita at a conference, but you do not know the child-care directors. Your role is to help the group think about regulations that applicants should be asked to follow, as well as the cost per child for providing truly Head Start-like services.

Reflecting on this reading, identify steps that you can take to prepare for the meeting:

Scenario 2. You are a Head Start family services manager. You've worked on several committees with Alberta, the director of a United Way-funded family counseling program in your community. Although your program does not contract with Alberta's organization, you've always felt that you and Alberta share similar values about how best to serve children and families. Alberta calls to invite you to a meeting with representatives of 12 other community agencies. She is concerned about the amount of domestic violence that her agency sees in its practice, and feels that it would be useful for the group to explore ways to address this issue together. You know and have worked with almost all of the other representatives.

Reflecting on the previous reading, identify steps that you can take to prepare for the meeting.

Part II (10 min.) If you are working in pairs or a group, discuss your answers, why you gave them, and any points of difference.

STEP 7. SUMMARY

Suggested time: 10 min.

KEY POINTS

- the developmental stages of community collaborations
- strategies for beginning a dialogue with potential partners
- the roles collaborators can play
- representing your organization to the collaborative
- representing the collaboration to your organization

PERSONAL REVIEW

What did you learn from this activity?

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How will you use your new knowledge and skills in your work?

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What other things do you think you might need to learn in order to master the skill of moving your organization through collaboration?

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